

REMARKS

In the November 2, 2007 Office Action, claims 1-15 stand rejected in view of prior art. No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the November 2, 2007 Office Action, Applicants have amended claims 1, 2 and 9 as indicated above. Thus, claims 1-15 are pending, with claim 1 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of above amendments and the following comments.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the numbered paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,445,261 to Kimura (hereinafter "Kimura patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,467,859 to Sahlberg (hereinafter "Sahlberg patent"), Japanese Laid-Open Utility Model Patent Application Publication No. 50-21274 Y1 (hereinafter "Japanese '274 publication") and Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Publication No. 57-175612 A (hereinafter "Japanese '612 publication"). In response, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 as mentioned above.

More specifically, independent claim 1 now clearly recites that a reciprocating movement mechanism having a rotation motor and a ***parallel link*** including ***first and second support members*** to ***support*** the trough, the rotation motor being operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a rotary force in one rotational direction to oscillate the first and second members while the first and second members are ***maintained parallel*** to each other to reciprocatingly move the trough via the parallel link along the conveyance direction of the article. This arrangement is ***not*** disclosed or suggested by the Kimura patent, the Sahlberg patent, the Japanese '274 publication, the Japanese '612 publication or any other prior art of record.

The Office Action appears to rely on the Japanese '612 publication to allegedly show a reciprocating movement mechanism including a parallel link as recited in independent claim 1. However, the Japanese '612 publication merely discloses a trough moving mechanism utilizing a movement of an eccentric cam 5A to move resilient support members 3 in the transverse direction via a connecting plate 5C. Such a cam mechanism disclosed in the Japanese '612 publication is ***not*** usually considered as a ***parallel link*** mechanism. More

specifically, a parallel link usually refers to a linkage mechanism including a pair of linkage arms having the same length, movements of which are interlocked while maintained parallel to each other. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art having common sense would **not** reasonably consider the cam mechanism disclosed in the Japanese '612 publication to correspond to the parallel link as now recited in independent claim 1.

Moreover, the Japanese '612 publication **fails** to disclose or suggest any structure that corresponds to the first and second **support members** to **support** the trough as now recited in independent claim 1. The cam mechanism disclosed in the Japanese '612 publication moves the troughs T_1 and T_2 via the resilient support members 3. However, as clearly shown in Figure 1 of the Japanese '612 publication, the resilient support members 3 do **not** actually **support** the troughs T_1 and T_2 . Instead, a plurality of support rods with rollers is provided to support the troughs T_1 and T_2 . Therefore, even if the cam mechanism of the Japanese '612 publication were considered to correspond to the reciprocating movement mechanism having the parallel link, which is not true, the Japanese '612 publication would still **fail** to disclose or suggest the **parallel link** including **first and second support members** to **support** the trough.

In the present invention, the arm members (i.e., the first and second support members) constituting the parallel link of the reciprocating movement mechanism are also used to support the trough. Therefore, the number of components used in the transport apparatus can be reduced, and the structure thereof can be simplified. Moreover, with the arrangements now recited in independent claim 1, at least one of the first and second support members of the parallel link is removably coupled to the trough via the first protruding part and the depressed part. The parallel link is also operatively coupled to the rotation motor so that the parallel link can be reciprocated back and forth along the conveyance direction simply by rotating the rotation motor in one rotational direction.

Accordingly, **none** of the Kimura patent, the Sahlberg patent, the Japanese '274 publication and the Japanese '612 publication discloses or suggests a reciprocating movement mechanism having a rotation motor and a **parallel link** including **first and second support members** to **support** the trough, the rotation motor being operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a rotary force in one rotational direction to oscillate the first and second members while the first and second members are **maintained parallel** to each other to

reciprocatingly move the trough via the parallel link along the conveyance direction of the article. Therefore, the hypothetical combination of the prior art references could **not** render the limitations now recited in independent claim 1 obvious.

It is well settled in U.S. patent law that the mere fact that the prior art can be modified does **not** make the modification obvious, unless the prior art provides an **apparent reason** for the desirability of the modification. Accordingly, the prior art of record lacks any apparent reason, suggestion or expectation of success for modifying the patents to create the Applicants' unique arrangement of the transport apparatus.

Accordingly, Applicants believe the transport apparatus as now recited in independent claim 1 is **neither** disclosed **nor** suggested by the prior art of record, whether taken singularly or in combination.

Moreover, Applicants believe that the dependent claims 2-15 are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claim 1, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims 2-15 are further allowable because they include additional limitations. Thus, Applicants believe that since the prior art of record does not disclose or suggest the invention as set forth in independent claim 1, the prior art of record also fails to disclose or suggest the inventions as set forth in the dependent claims.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn in view of the above comments and amendments.

Request for Listing Correct Publication Number in PTO-892

Applicants note that Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Publication No. 2005-272132 to Komatsu was erroneously listed in the form PTO-892 attached to the Office Action as No. 2005-693778.

Applicants respectfully request the number of this publication in the form PTO-892 be corrected so that the correct publication number (i.e., JP2005-272132 A) would appear on the cover of the patent.

Prior Art Citation

In the Office Action, additional references were made of record. Applicants believe that these references do not render the claimed invention obvious.

Appl. No. 10/561,388
Amendment dated January 16, 2008
Reply to Office Action of November 2, 2007

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In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1-15 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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